(Washington, D.C.) -- Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) voted to commit $23.6 billion over two years to science students, teachers, researchers, and businesses to ensure the US global competitiveness in science and math. The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 2272, the 21st Century Competitiveness Act of 2007, by voice vote yesterday.

"We are making a serious commitment to the science and math education of children today in order to guarantee our global leadership in technology and scientific research in the future," said Congressman Rodriguez. "Scientific innovation is a cornerstone of our economy in San Antonio. I am a long-time supporter of local research programs like Dark Screen and the Alamo Project at UTSA, and I am proud to have continued my support by voting in favor of HR 2272 and its restoration of our national commitment to science and math education and research."

H.R. 2272 authorizes a total of $23.6 billion over fiscal years 2008 - 2010 to provide funding for programs to create more qualified teachers in science and math fields and to support scientific research and innovation. Created at the request of a group of bipartisan Congressional lawmakers, the 2005 National Academies report which served as the basis for this bill, "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," found that the U.S. could stand to lose its competitive edge without immediate action.

Specifically, the bill authorizes $21 billion for research and education programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF), $2.5 billion for the research labs, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership and other activities at the National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST), and $96 million for early career awards and teacher professional development programs at the Department of Energy (DOE). An additional $70 million is authorized for these programs at DOE for fiscal years 2011-2012.

Initiatives included in HR 2272:

- Supports thousands of new science and math teachers and provide current teachers additional expertise through NSF's Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program and Math and Science Partnerships Program;

- Creates the Technology Innovation Program at NIST to fund high-risk, high-reward,

pre-competitive technology development with high potential for public benefit;

- Expands programs at NSF to enhance the undergraduate education of the future science and engineering workforce, including at 2-year colleges;

- Expands early career grant programs and provides additional support for outstanding young researchers at both NSF and DOE; and

- Strengthens interagency planning and coordination for research infrastructure and information technology (i.e. high-speed computing).

- Includes provisions throughout the bill to help broaden participation in science and engineering fields at all levels

Congressman Rodriguez serves on the House Committee on Appropriations.